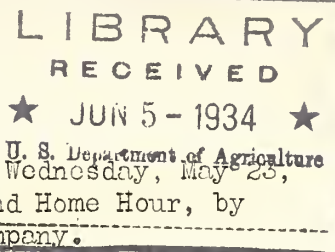


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THE DROUGHT SITUATION



A radio talk by J. B. Kincer, Weather Bureau, broadcast Wednesday, May 23, 1934, in the Department of Agriculture period, National Farm and Home Hour, by 50 radio stations associated with the National Broadcasting Company.

Our latest reports from the extensive drought areas of the central valleys, the West, and the Northwest are far from encouraging. During the past week rainfall of agricultural importance over any considerable area occurred only in Michigan and eastern Wisconsin and more locally in southeastern Iowa, northern Missouri, and the northern parts of Illinois and Indiana. In other sections, except for very local showers, the drought was intensified by the continued absence of rain and the abnormally high temperatures. The weather is now much cooler.

Small grain crops and pastures are suffering most, while the stock water situation has become serious in a good many places. In a large area, comprising the Central and Northern States, between the Appalachian and Rocky Mountains, the only extensive section now having good growing weather is the eastern half of Kansas, though western and parts of central Kentucky, Michigan, and eastern Wisconsin, together with a few local areas elsewhere, have had beneficial showers the last few days. Some parts of northern Illinois report practically no rain during the last 25 days.

We have just said that the small grain crops, wheat, oats, barley, and the like, are suffering most. Winter wheat has been badly damaged in the western half of Kansas and in Nebraska. In the eastern half of Kansas the crop is doing nicely, and is holding fairly well, considering the dry weather, in Missouri and most of the Ohio Valley, though in the latter area there has been more or less damage to wheat, especially in northern Illinois where some is turning yellow and dying. Oats and barley also are suffering in the drought area. Small grains are mostly good in the Atlantic States and the Pacific Northwest.

At the present time, spring wheat is in bad shape. Some early seeded is fair to good, but it has been too dry for germination of late-seeded nearly everywhere, and much grain has been blown out by severe dust storms. The dust storms, of course, some of which reached as far east as the Atlantic Ocean, were caused by high winds blowing over excessively dry, dusty soil, such as we sometimes see from a gust of wind blowing over a dusty road. Much of the dust was carried into the higher atmosphere and then far east by high easterly winds that usually are blowing up there. Even here in Washington, on May 11, the air was filled with dust, much of which had come for more than a thousand miles, or from the extremely dry Western States.

But now we are getting away from our story, do let's go back to the present weather effect on crops. In addition to the small grain crops, pastures and stock water are seriously affected. In this regard a critical condition has developed in the Northwest and some of the great western grazing areas. For example: There is much good range food in Wyoming, but it is not available for stock because of a lack of water.

With regard to the corn crop - the only conclusive effect of the dryness up to the present time is chiefly through a delay in germination, which could be largely overcome by good growing weather soon and favorable summer conditions. Most of the corn crop has been planted, and considerable of the early seeded has come up to good stands.

(over)

Before leaving the drought area and taking a peep at the more favored sections of the country, we wish to say a few words about the history of the drought. So far as the Northwestern States are concerned it has been coming on more or less gradually for a good many years. Farther South, say the central valleys, it is of more recent development; that is, rainfall has been more or less deficient for a year past, beginning last June. We are not going to tire you with a batch of statistics, but a brief summary of recent months will give a better background from which to view the present situation. For the twelve months, beginning last June, and including May of this year to date, every month has had below normal rainfall in Wisconsin; eleven of the twelve in Indiana, Iowa, Missouri, South Dakota, and Wyoming; Ten of the twelve months had less than normal in Ohio, Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, North Dakota, and Nevada; Nine of the twelve in Utah, and eight in Kentucky, Kansas, Nebraska, Montana, Colorado, and Idaho.

Let us consider, for example, a State in which droughty conditions have more recently developed - Ohio. As before stated, deficiencies, in general, began in this area just about a year ago. Since last May only two months have had as much as normal rainfall, and every month since last September has had deficiencies, with the present month, so far, decidedly the driest of the group. The Ohio accumulated deficiency in rainfall for the period has reached more than 10 inches. Now this means, for the State as a whole for the last 12 months, a shortage of more than 30 billion tons of water. A statement like that doesn't register in the human mind, so let's put it in another way. Suppose you could count tons of water at the rate of two each second, 24 hours, a day, and 365 days a year, without stopping. How long do you think it would require to count this twelve months shortage in tons of water for Ohio. No, you guessed wrong. It would require more than 500 years of ceaseless counting to complete the job, and Ohio is only one of the many States suffering from drought.

Not let us turn to a brighter picture. Conditions in the Southern and more eastern States continued decidedly favorable, except for a need of moisture in northern New England and the western half of New York. Rain would be helpful in Texas and Oklahoma, but crops in these States are not yet suffering. The widespread, generous showers of the week in the Carolinas were especially helpful, and all vegetation is responding vigorously to improved moisture conditions in the Southeast. Cotton is developing well and crops in the South and most of the Atlantic area are growing nicely.

